Interview with Robert Bauer

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ROBERT BAUER

Interviewed by: Cliff Groce

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Q: Bob, what were the circumstances of your joining the Voice oAmerica?

Background: Austrian Birth. Anti-Nazi Radio Broadcasting In Czechoslovakia, France, andUltimately Over Crosley Radio In U.S. In 1939

BAUER: You probably know that I was born in Austria, and was in the anti-Nazi movement and became a refugee when the Nazis came. I was first in Czechoslovakia and then in France. And in France, in '39, I got into radio. By chance—I was a lawyer. And we were in an anti-Nazi radio station, set up by the French, together with the Czechoslovaks. We were the Austrian Freedom Broadcasting section of this anti-Nazi station.

Q: Broadcasting into Austria.

BAUER: Into Austria. There were only a few of us. The chief of the Austrian anti-Nazi outfit was a man named Martin Fuchs.

Q: When was this?

BAUER: This was 1939.

Q: Just after the war began.

BAUER: For the French; the States were not in it yet. So I ran this Austrian Freedom Broadcasting Station in F#camp, Normandy. Then when France fell we made our way to the United States. The reason I tell you that is that later on, I went on a lecture tour. Some people had known about my work against the Nazis, and so they sent me on a lecture tour to various places, like Rotary Clubs and so forth, to talk about what was happening in Europe. Then we were in Woodstock, New York, with some relations of my mother-in-law, and one day I received a letter, saying, would you be interested in coming to Cincinnati and starting a German radio broadcast?

Q: This was Crosley Broadcasting.

BAUER: That was Crosley. This came about because in those days all overseas broadcasting was done by private short-wave broad- casters, and they had agreed on doing something voluntarily. Usually it was done for commercial purposes; Crosley had sponsors like Procter and Gamble.

Q: This was before the United States got in the war.

BAUER: Before we got in the war. It was sort of a voluntary contribution. And they approached the State Department, saying, “Can you recommend to us some people who have a clean record?” I got my visa to enter here based on my political activities in Europe. So they gave my name, along with a few others, to them, and Cincinnati got in touch with me, and I went over there and started to broadcast. There was another fellow whom we hired to start the Italian broadcast, Georgio Padovano.

Q: Of course. I knew him years ago.

BAUER: He's now in Florida.

Q: He is still around.

BAUER: He is in Florida, a very good friend of mine. We always keep in touch. So we hired Georgio Padovano to start the Italian broadcasts. There were various stations broadcasting—CBS, NBC, Westinghouse—and we took on German and Italian, Westinghouse took on French.

January, 1942: Joins Voice of America At Its BeginningAnyway, when Pearl Harbor came, we were immediately approached: Come to New York; we're starting the Voice of America. So what happened was, on February 23, Georgio Padovano and I boarded the overnight train from Cincinnati to New York City, and on February 24, when the Voice of America began, we came straight to Madison Avenue—270 Madison Avenue—and were in the first broadcasts of the Voice of America on that day. As you probably know from others, there was one studio built of bricks on that fourth floor where we were. We had to hand each other the door to go in and out. Now, we soon moved over to 57th Street.

Sorting Out the “Cast Of Characters” In Early VOA Broadcasting Days

Q: Excuse me for just a minute, but there's a discrepancy between your account and John Houseman's account of the initial broadcasts. Houseman - and I have an English translation of the original German script - says that there was a deliberate policy not to use Europeans on the air lest the Germans think, “Aha, they're just turncoats and traitors.” They used Americans who were bilingual, and he listed a man named Roland Winter, Peter Kappel, William Harlan Hale, and Artur Schnabel's son on the first broadcast.

BAUER: Mr. Houseman was wrong. The simple fact, to begin with, was that Peter Kappel was a German, without any doubt.

Q: And there was a man, another Austrian, named Franz Hoellering.

BAUER: Franz Hoellering was the chief of the German Section. He was an Austrian.

Q: But he did not go on the air, according to Houseman.

BAUER: He did not go on the air. However, on the air went yours truly, and Padovano in Italian on that same day.

Q: Again, Houseman says that it was about a week later that the other languages went on the air; that German was the first —

BAUER: It was all on the same day, because Padovano came on at the same time I did. William Harlan Hale of course was a native American.

Q: He became chief later, according to Houseman.

BAUER: Not while I was there.

Q: And then Richard C. Hottelett took over from him.

BAUER: Richard C. Hottelett was never the chief there. Richard was with me, too, but he was never the chief of the German language service.

Q: I'm just quoting Houseman.

BAUER: I know that. The late Mr. Houseman was a great man but he cannot —

Q: I was going to ask him some of these questions. I had an interview scheduled with him for last year but he died.

BAUER: Mr. Hoellering was the German language chief, and Mr. William Harlan Hale was never chief of the German language section in the VOA. He was with us, and in London with ABSIE. And then in the Foreign Service I knew Bill Hale very well.

On that first day there were a few other German speakers: George Eliasberg, and a fellow by the name of Fritz Schmidt—good German name. Roland Winter came much later. He played Charlie Chan in the movies. He was a marvelous fellow, because he was a native American of Austrian parents and spoke a very nice German with a slight English accent.

Q: But a copy of the script that I have in my files has the names on there: Hale and Winter and...

BAUER: On the 24th of February?

Q: The 24th of February. And the only time Schnabel appears is in reading a quote from Stalin. This is why I'm confused.

BAUER: Now I'm getting confused, believe you me. When you or somebody talks to Padovano, let him say what he has to say. Because I do know, also, my whole government record shows clearly that I began my service on February 24, 1942.

Q: I'm not arguing, Bob.

BAUER: But I tell you, I'm now getting curious about it. They first had my government service starting on the 25th and years later I suddenly got: “Correction”; it was the 24th of February, 1942 that my government service began. I also remember that the grade that they offered me was CAF-11.

Q: That was high for those days.

BAUER: Very high for those days. It was $3,800 per year. And when I was promoted to 12 it was $4,600. I will never forget those figures. But anyhow, all I can tell you, I was on the air on that day and on the following days. I don't know. I cannot contribute more to that discrepancy.

Q: I'll talk to Padovano. I'm sure he'll —

BAUER: Talk to Padovano. All our memories can fail.

Q: Mr. Houseman's memory was in error regarding the first day, too, because he said it was February 11th and not the 24th.

BAUER: We all are humans with particular memories.

Let me just go back. Roland Winter I just don't recall on the first day. It might be in the confusion I didn't know everybody. Plus the name of Werner Michel —

Q: Oh, yes. Chief of production.

BAUER: I don't know, is he still alive?

Q: He lives on Beekman Place in New York, and I've tried three times to get him and I haven't succeeded yet.

BAUER: He was then literally the program director under Houseman.

Q: Gene Kern explained that Houseman and Michel and Connie Ernst were the triumvirate that ran the place.

BAUER: Absolutely correct. So this is how the broadcasts began over there. And then we moved over—I cannot tell you exactly when, but a few months later—to 57th Street. We spread out, and were in the Argonaut Building and the Fisk Building, and then across the street we also occupied some space later on, in the GM Building. We were then the German language section. There was Eliasberg, and Schmidt, and a Mr. Bornstein. The broadcasts were in German, Italian, French and English, and we had them in shifts, one after the other.

Q: But they started adding languages very quickly, didn't they?

BAUER: Oh, yes. But the pattern of German, French, Italian and English continued day and night, 24 hours, which is why we have those shifts.

Q: So the other languages were on other frequencies and other transmitters.

BAUER: Absolutely. Then there were other people added to the staff. There was Mrs. Bokowicz, and a Konrad Maril. And much later, after the war, Walter Engel.

Q: Oh, sure, I knew Walter.

BAUER: In fact, I brought him into VOA. After the war he came out of the U.S. Army. He was an actor in the old days. He came on as a part-time announcer. I was impressed with him; he was very well-spoken. I said, “Come tomorrow and we'll give you a test, and you'll be hired if you pass the security test” — which he did. And then he was with us till he went overseas in the foreign service.

1944: Advance Organization For ABSIE (American Broadcasting Station In Europe)

Now, the next thing that comes to my mind is that prior to the invasion of '44 we began to organize the American Broadcasting Station in Europe — ABSIE.

Q: Before we get to ABSIE, I would like you to describe the kinds of programming that you did in the German language on VOA.

BAUER: Well, it was the regular pattern: news, commentary... Then there was the Voice of the Neutrals, in which we had Finnish and Swedish and Danish newspaper quotes and Americana. In the morning we got guidance from Broadcast Control, and we also got monitoring reports.

Q: Americana seems like a luxury in time of war.

BAUER: But we did it; it was just part of the program. We couldn't just have news and commentary. There was the policy guidance, and then we did our program.

Communists In The Voice In 1944

We were located just next to the English service, and who should be sitting there writing away but Howard Fast. It always amused me that after all the Communist talk during the McCarthy period, nobody recalled that we did have Communists working there during the war, like Howard Fast. And the head of the Czechoslovak service was a Mr. Hofmeister, who, when the Communists took over in Czechoslovakia in '48, became the first Communist ambassador to Paris. So we had a few of them; there was no doubt about it.

Anyway—we were security-cleared, and I went through a special security clearance when we went into ABSIE. Now, I cannot tell you more than that there was this daily policy guidance. There was also a fellow who played an important part in the policy guidance process, by the name of Douglas Schneider. He later became cultural counselor in Paris. But the people who really ran it were first Houseman and then to a great extent Werner Michel and then Mucio Delgado—another name that comes from that period.

Q: And for a long time.

BAUER: Oh, yes, a very long time. And Alfred Puhan, who later became an ambassador. And now he's in Florida.

Now, that was the program. We also had a little translation section which Konrad Maril headed. We had to translate into English.

Q: You mean you had to translate the German program back into English?

BAUER: We did not do what was taken from English into German, but what we originated.

Q: Did you originate any commentaries?

BAUER: Oh, yes. And of course we were also monitored. So in that sense the air security was tight.

Q: Fail-safe.

BAUER: Upstairs in the monitoring office was Edmund Schechter ...

Q: I didn't realize he was one of the originals.

BAUER: Oh, yes, he started up there. There was also a former professor who knew eleven languages—and the joke about him was that he spoke German in eleven languages!

Q: You don't mean the man who was head of monitoring later in Washington — Dr. Solzbacher?

BAUER: Solzbacher, yes.

Q: And he had the made-up language, too, Esperanto.

BAUER: That's right.

Q: He walked at a tilt.

BAUER: (Laughter) Yes, Dr. Solzbacher.

Prelude To D Day LandingSo, there's not much else to tell you. There was nothing sensational. Of course, there were great moments which we will never forget. The North African landing came, and there was a big security business and people were put in special studios. One of them was Puhan, who announced in German. He was born in

Germany and was also a professor of German before he joined the Voice of America. He was used on that day.

We all knew that something was going on, everything was very secure. A Norwegian producer by the name of Embretson, who always had this wonderful Norwegian accent, you know, just before the release time came, with Roosevelt announcing the landing, opened the microphone and said, “Now, first we play the Yankee 'Dewdle' [Doodle] and then Mr. 'Pewhan' [Puhan] will be the first one to speak when it's through the 'tewn' [tune].” Well, we were on the floor from laughing. (Laughter) We had to cover with “technical complications,” but we finally recovered and said, “You shut up and don't throw any more kews [clues] to Mr. Pewhan!” (Laughter) Well, in the meantime we had a German refugee named Kurt Dosmar and we had a wonderful lady who was a secretary, Mrs. Kahn, and Mr. Dosmar was running around saying, “Here we invade North Africa and Mrs. Kahn cannot be found.” (Laughter) Of course, because of the security they had sent a Navy commander from Washington with the recording of President Roosevelt, and the code word from Washington was “Elmer Davis has resigned.” Robert Sherwood was sitting up there and allegedly saying, “Who cares!” I cannot guarantee the validity of that story. (Laughter)

Q: They had some terrible disagreements, as I recall.

BAUER: Oh, absolutely. I got to know Sherwood in London. Wonderful gentleman. They recruited for London, for the so-called Yankee Unit.

Q: This was for ABSIE.

BAUER: That's right. And they asked me to be in charge of the German language section. I hired Puhan to go with me, and he succeeded me when I left. Did you run into a fellow by the name of Steiner, who was with us?

Q: B. Franklin Steiner?

BAUER: B. Franklin Steiner.

Q: I met him years later in Europe.

BAUER: He was with us in the Yankee Unit, and now is widowed and living in Northern Virginia. So we recruited a few people and were shipped to London.

Q: Did you work with Sid Sulkin in London?

BAUER: No, I worked with him in New York. In London, from the top down, so to speak, were Robert Sherwood, then William Paley...

Q: Really?

BAUER: Oh, very much so.

Q: What was his job?

BAUER: Oh, he was an overlord. He received me right away when I got there. He was very active.

Q: What was the relationship between Paley and Sherwood? I would think you would have two prima donnas —

BAUER: We had studios in Soho, and those people got right up next to the seat of power uptown. I forget now the various titles they had, who was in charge of what. Then there was a guy from CBS, and then Robert Saudek, who is now here at the Library of Congress. We had a French language section, which was headed by Pierre Lazareff.

Q: He had been in New York, too.

BAUER: He was in New York. Then we had a Swedish section. There was a fellow by the name of Wennerholm who was in charge, and it turned out he had changed his name. Of course, everything was concentrated on Germany.

Q: How many languages did you broadcast in from ABSIE?

BAUER: This I cannot tell you; I don't remember. I do remember French and I do remember Swedish, but I don't know what the others were. Of course, we were the focus of it all.

Q: How many hours a day were you on in German?

BAUER: We were on in the evening. We probably started at six or seven and went to midnight, if I'm not mistaken. I hired, for instance, Golo Mann, the son of Thomas Mann, who was with the army over there, and we got him out of the army and he came to work with us. So we had Puhan and Golo Mann and a fellow named Brandt who now lives in South America. Then we had a few other people. The main commentaries were delivered by yours truly and by Golo Mann. The first time Golo Mann was going to do his commentary, he went in the studio and sat down and he suddenly took out a little black bottle of eau de cologne and threw it over his face. In that small studio, we were nearly knocked out. One of us asked, “What the hell did you do that for?” And he said, “It relaxes me.” (Laughter) Puhan can testify to that, too.

And then when the doodlebugs came—you know, the flying V-1 weapons—they'd go, Rrrrrrr — rrrrrr — rrrrrr, and then cut and after a period go Boom! And every time, every evening, when the attack would come—Boom!—without fail Golo Mann would say, “En fin.” Why, we'll never know. We finally said, “Shut up!” (Laughter)

Q: How old was Golo Mann at that time?

BAUER: In his thirties. He was a private in the army assigned to the OSS. We got him out and he got the right to wear civilian clothes.

Q: His papa was in Pacific Palisades at the time.

BAUER: That's correct. So, that was it. You asked me what the program was. By that time, the closer we got to the invasion time the more we got into signal-sending. In the evening a courier came and handed me a note. You will broadcast the following message throughout the evening: Aunt Anna has a cold. Repeat, Aunt Anna has a cold. Or, Tuesday will be nice weather.

Q: These were signals to the underground. Did you just insert them into the program, or in the middle of the news?

BAUER: Oh, no, no. We'd say, “Here are a few messages,” and read them. Then there came the famous moment when they handed me a note, just before the invasion, and it said, “Fishermen, longitude so-and-so, latitude so-and-so. Stop fishing and make for port.” We looked at the map every day, and one day it was the Danish coast, then the Norwegian coast, then it was the Belgian coast, and then it was the French coast. A famous joke came one evening after we had done this for the umpteenth time. We finally said, “Tomorrow we are going on the air and say, 'Fishermen, fish!'” (Laughter) Anyhow, we learned later that it had an effect, that (A) fishermen did make for port, and (B) it did apparently confuse the German intelligence as to where the landing might be.

Now, the interesting thing was that with all this strict security, there were things which were the opposite of secrecy. You could guess what was happening. One or two days before the invasion we were asked to make available a staffer to be detached to go over for a special assignment, but he would have to be able to speak French fluently. You don't go to Norway and speak French. (Laughter) Well, those things were happening. But we got through it.

D Day! And Subsequent Days of VOA Broadcasting

And then came what to me was the greatest day—I say this without trying to be dramatic—the greatest day of my life. I was about to leave the office on June fifth when I was told to please stay—I was living in the Hotel Cumberland—just stay there, and please put your uniform on. (Our uniforms were like war correspondents!) And take some chocolates or something to have to eat —which was a strange thing—and wait to be contacted. So, I waited. Then came a staff car, and whoosh!, so long. We come to a big building. BBC was located there to a great extent. In I went. ID card. First row, second, third, another one, the fifth. To the elevator here, one more ID card showing. Tommies with guns. Up in the elevator. The door opens, and I walk into the room, and here sit a few characters I knew: the boss of CBS, and Pierre Lazareff. And I knew something was going on; we weren't there just for the hell of it. When we had to go to the men's room, a British soldier went with us.

Suddenly we heard a lot of airplanes overhead, in waves, and it was shortly after midnight when a door opened and an American general—I cannot give you his name now—came in. He unfolded a large paper, which was a map of France. He looked at his watch, and said, “Gentlemen, in five hours and 14 minutes”—or whatever it was—”the Allied troops will land in Normandy.” That's when your heart stops. He said, “Now, here's the briefing for your background.” Then he gave each of us a paper. It was the sequence of broadcast announcements: King George VI, President Roosevelt, General Eisenhower. Item 6, I'll never forget, was “Local monarchs.” (Laughter) The local monarchs included King Haakon of Norway and Queen Wilhelmina of the Netherlands. The one name missing was Charles DeGaulle, because as we found out later he held out for any number of things that had to be promised to him. Finally, at about four o'clock in the morning they rushed in and gave us the DeGaulle statement.

Q: Where was he to go in the order?

BAUER: That I couldn't tell you now. Probably very close to the top. And of course Winston Churchill. Oh, when I left the night before I told the staff the night shift should stay on duty until they heard from me. So we sat down to do a broadcast, and the broadcast created itself, with General Eisenhower and all the other statements. The only thing was, what do you do to start" "Hier spricht die Stimme Amerikas," and then what? The only thing that came to my mind, and this is what I wrote down, was "Der Sturm aus dem Westen hat begonnen." (The storm out of the west has begun) So we were ready.

Out came the waves of airplanes—by now it must have been close to six o'clock in the morning—when I was suddenly called and rushed down to a staff car. We breezed through the empty streets to Soho. We had an arrangement with the BBC that we followed each other, every 15 minutes, with our German programs. So it happened that when I got in, the release time came and so, Go on the air. Off we went a few minutes before six. If it had been 15 minutes later it would have been the BBC. And this was by sheer coincidence that I was the first to announce the invasion, from London, strictly by sheer coincidence of time. For the next days the broadcasts wrote themselves. Continuous communiques and so forth. Until that very important day of the German generals' putsch.

Q: How did you keep getting the word from the front in Normandy as to the progress of the invasion?

BAUER: Oh, that we got from the military.

Q: It was fast? It was up to date?

BAUER: Well, it was a few hours off, but it was up to date.

Q: They were not trying to conceal or withhold information if things were not going our way...

BAUER: Oh, no, no, no. And then came the famous night of the generals. That was when William Harlan Hale was still there. I was at a dinner party and got the word, Come straight over (to the office). As I recall, we extended the broadcast hour. We had a wonderful gentleman, George Baker. He was one of those civilians who came over—he was one of the husbands of Dorothy Schiff of the New York Post—wonderful gentleman—wonderful dark blue eyes. And he came in that night, and made the statement of the day: "Gentlemen, we have in our hands now to shorten this war. We have to make the German mothers cry to get their sons and husbands back." It was a very emotional statement. Things were falling apart over there, you know, as it looked for a moment. We could only broadcast what we knew, according to policy guidance.

Q: And the information was pretty sparse.

BAUER: It was very sparse. All we could say was, "This is what we know as of this moment," no more than that.

It was then that I was succeeded by Puhan and went back to the States and rejoined the German language service of the Voice of America.

Q: Excuse me just a second, Bob, but while you were broadcasting from ABSIE in German, there was simultaneously a German service operating from New York?

BAUER: Oh, indeed. And a French service, too. On shortwave.

Q: So you were in effect competing with each other.

BAUER: Well, not competing, but complementing each other. Whoever got the listeners got the listeners.

Q: But was there any attempt to coordinate the broadcasts of the two services?

BAUER: Obviously there was the same policy guidance, except that ours was much more attuned to the daily things that were happening over there. We didn't know what they were broadcasting from New York. I don't know whether they knew what we were broadcasting. But we were both under strict policy guidance.

By the way, I should tell you about one of the great moments of Robert Sherwood. It was when the V-1 weapons came. We were sitting on the top floor in Inveresk House with Sherwood and Ambassador John Winant, who later committed suicide. Suddenly the alarm went on for the doodlebugs, and one came right across Hyde Park. You could see the things because they had a long burning tail. Sherwood said that Winston Churchill, at a certain meeting when the doodlebugs came, got under the table with the others, and when he got up he made the wonderful Churchillian statement: “The only thing wrong is you can't get up without a loss of dignity.” (Laughter) So, we all ducked at the moment the doddlebug came, and while we were under the table a thunderbolt also struck, and we heard Robert Sherwood's voice saying, “HIS voice is still louder!” (Laughter)

Then I came back to New York and the Voice of America. And the war then ended.

Q: At what point did a separate Austrian service get created?

BAUER: November 1, 1943.

Q: Oh! During the war, not after the war.

BAUER: During the war—in the Moscow Declaration on the reestablishment of a free and independent Austria. Martin Fuchs became the first chief of the service, and later went to Austria.

Q: But when you came back from ABSIE, you said you joined the German service. Was it the German service to Austria or the German service to Germany?

1945: Back In Washington. Near Death Of VOA; Saved By General Marshall's Plea Before Congress

BAUER: To Austria. When the war ended in May of '45, our Austrian program, to which I was uniquely connected, and with nothing else at that time... You may know that they nearly ruined the Voice of America completely at that point. Congressman Taber of New York was about to just throw it out the window when George Marshall went up to the Hill and pleaded, and I think they saved ten desks—the English desk, and among others the German, the Austrian, the French and the Italian desks, I believe. Japanese, also. The basic idea was that there were immediate American interests and forces involved.

We had a network in Austria, Red-White-Red (Rot-Weiss-Rot) and our programs were relayed over the Austrian network. There was also a daily two-way between us and Vienna in which they criticized the day's program and gave us suggestions for other programs. It was a very nice thing.

Q: Who in Vienna was doing this—the military government?

BAUER: There were a number of people there. We had the four military zones, but we also had the American legation, as it was known then, with Mr. John Erhard as minister, and Martin Herz, later Ambassador Herz, who died a few years ago. The first fellow who was in charge of this Red-White-Red was a Mr. Cohrssen (See Interview of Mr. Hans Cohrssen in the Oral History Series.), whom I never met. That was long before my time. There were a number of people who were there—some names are coming back to me. There was a fellow in the press part whose name was Reinert, who came out of Minnesota, and various other officials running Red-White-Red whose names I have forgotten. Our commentaries then were reprinted in the Wiener Kurier, and Ted Kaghan was very instrumental in all of these things. (Poor Ted Kaghan, who got the axe later on because of McCarthy.) That went very nicely, and a few times I went to Vienna. That was very interesting because of the role we played as the Voice of America.

Let me give you the most moving story about it. My wife wrote a book, entitled Beyond the Chestnut Trees, and the story was included in it, but I'll tell you anyway. I told you we had the two-way conversations with Red-White-Red, and one day they said, “We have a request from a hospital in Vienna. A little girl named Christl, eight years old, is down with a terrible condition and there's only one drug, which is not available in Vienna. The Austrian doctors came over and asked, 'Can the Voice of America do something for us?'” It was on a Friday afternoon that we got the message. We were able on Saturday to locate the commanding general, Paul Streit, who could give the order to open a certain warehouse. In that warehouse they got the drug.

Q: A warehouse in Vienna.

BAUER: Here!

Q: Here?!

BAUER: They put it in a military airplane and flew it to Vienna and got it to the hospital. I have the letter from the parents, which my wife quotes in her book, thanking me and the Voice of America and the American people for saving the life of their child. Now, the point I want to make is that the Voice of America was in the minds of those people.

Bauer's Experiences On Various Post-War Temporary Assignments To ViennaSo, we played a role, and I can only tell you when I came back (to Vienna) for the first time I didn't know what was happening to me. I was interviewed, I was run all over the place, from left to right, because I was the Robert Bauer of die Stimme Amerikas. Many refugees changed their names. I never did. But they also knew it in Austria, that people changed their names, so in our listeners' mail came a letter in which one listener wrote, “May we please ask you what the real name of Robert Bauer is?” Of course, Bauer is a very common name. They couldn't believe that a man would broadcast under his own name. I said, “Sorry, but that's

what it was when I was born, and that's how you can find me in the parish of Lichtenthal where I was baptized." I give that as an example to what extent we played a role there.

And there is a dispatch that the late Martin Herz wrote when he was political counselor at the legation, about my first visit to Vienna, in which he pointed out, for instance, that I was not only immediately received by the Austrian chancellor, Figl, but by the Socialist opposition party also. Not because I was Robert Bauer but I at that point represented something, namely the Voice of America and with it, America. Now it was a very, very interesting thing, and a very moving thing, too, to see what a tremendous role the United States played in the minds of people.

Q: Because when you're actually broadcasting you have no idea who out there is listening, or what effect you're having.

BAUER: Then you see it, you see it happening, and it's very heartening. I was there three times on a mission, and in one Austrian election, the one in 1952, I was there. Teddy Kaghan asked me to write a few editorials for the Wiener Kurier—not under my name—editorials. The interesting thing was that a few days later, after the first three editorials, an Austrian friend of mine came and said, "That's not the normal style of the Wiener Kurier; it sounds much more like a broadcast." (Laughter) He was very perceptive.

1955: Bauer Asked To Establish VOA Broadcasts To Baltic States And Finland

Anyhow, I stayed there as a commentator until May 1955, when the Austrian State Treaty was signed. At that time, however, we were in the midst of the Cold War, and I was suddenly asked to establish the languages to the Baltic countries—Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania—and Finland. Christl Heiskanen had been a secretary of ours in the German service during the war, and I knew that her husband was a Finn, and a journalist, so one day I said, "Bring him in. I'd like to talk to him." He became the first head of the Finnish service and then of the Estonian service.

Q: They've very dear friends of ours.

BAUER: We just missed them in Vienna now, when we were there in the summer.

Anyway, I had to establish those northern European broadcast services in a North European branch. And then I was transferred from there to the Field Services division—which got me into the McCarthy business.

Bauer Denies There Was Ever A “Viennese Mafia” At VOA, And If There Was, He Had No Part In It

Q: Can we back up a minute? Because before now there has been in the Voice of America already the so-called Viennese Mafia. Walter Roberts, Bob Bauer, John Albert.

BAUER: I was never a part of it.

Q: You were not? Well, this was the illusion, this was the impression...

BAUER: I swear to you there was no such thing.

Q: Well, it was a joke. Nobody ever thought it was a conspiracy.

BAUER: No, not even then. Albert and I went to the same school—all three of us went to the same gymnasium in Vienna. Walter Roberts' name was Rothenberg then. And we were never close. I was in the same class with John Albert's brother, and I knew him well, but we were in no way, in any way, shape or form—Eddie Schechter was much more together with Roberts than I ever was.

Q: So it was not even a loose association.

BAUER: None.

Q: Just coincidence that you three happened to be senior officials of the Voice.

BAUER: Absolutely. There was really a European Mafia in Bill Clark's office, but no, there was no such thing as an Austrian Mafia.

Q: Alex Klieforth told me that because he had spent some childhood years in Vienna, he had the Viennese lingo and he was accepted by you people as an honorary Viennese.

BAUER: I hired Alex. I made him chief of the French service, when I was chief of the European division later on. First there was the Field Services Division, which gets us into the McCarthy days, but let's skip them for a moment. When the McCarthy thing was over I was made chief of the European division. I was there during the Hungarian Revolution, which was a very important moment, and then they made me acting chief of Television, which didn't make sense at all.

Q: Well, at one point you were policy officer.

BAUER: That's right. European Division, Policy Office, and then Television manager. And from there I went into the foreign service, and took my first assignment in Iran.

Q: Let's not get ahead of ourselves.

BAUER: No. I'm just giving you the sequence of events.

Bauer Heads VOA European Division: Experiences With Alexander Barmine, One Of VOA's Most Noted Characters

Let skip McCarthy for a moment. The interesting thing in the European Division—well, two things. (A) I had to work with Alexander Barmine, who was one of the greatest characters I have ever met in my life. He was a very strange fellow. For some reason, he liked me, and therefore I could deal with him. But I had to find out how to do it. My favorite moment came when I said every single line from the Russian service that is not out of an English

commentary has to be approved by me. So, I cut out two sentences, and the secretary said, “Mr. Barmine wants to talk to you.” And here come the conversation: “Why did you cut out lines of commentary?” “Because it's against policy, Alex.” “Which policy?” “The Policy that I received.” “From where?” “From Pennsylvania Avenue.” “Who gives it to Pennsylvania Avenue?” “The State Department gives it to Pennsylvania Avenue.” “Who in the State Department?” “I do not know who in the State Department, but that's what it is.” And he took the paper and tore it up. But then they did what they were supposed to do. So he was one of my characters, because I had continuously to—by the way, he never violated policy, never. That was his whole game, you know.

Q: There are stories about the old 9:30 meetings in which he would be sitting down front reading the New York Times and listening to the conversation going on at the table, and when somebody would make some statement that he didn't approve of, he'd say, “That's idiotic!”

BAUER: Oh, yes. Oh, yes, he was great when he was very upset. This is on the record but you cannot put it into print. He would come to me with a paper, a memo, and say, “Now who put out this administrative shit?” He meant “sheet.” (Laughter) He was a great character. He told me about his life; he was an interesting man. He really never violated policy.

1956: VOA During The Hungarian Revolution

The real moment came during the Hungarian revolution. (I don't mind; you can write this because I will stick to it and they can sue me.) The fact is that this great policy guidance every day told you, “Please do not quote the New York Times on this or that but emphasize”—or as I used to say of the guidances, “Stress but do not emphasize”—suddenly there was nothing. It was sort of, play it straight. Now, we knew we had a special man sent to New York to the Security Council meetings, and we continued to report what

went on in the Security Council, and the official communiques, and we naturally kept away from any commentaries. What could we comment about?

Q: There was no policy?

BAUER: There was no policy. But suddenly those guys who were on your back every morning couldn't be seen, more or less. Paul Nadanyi was chief of the Hungarian service—also a great character. At my request he wrote a memoir of what happened in those days in the Voice of America Hungarian service—and I have it.

Q: I'd love to get a copy.

BAUER: I'll give it to you before you leave. But you'll give it back to me.

Q: Oh, certainly. I'll xerox it.

BAUER: I was involved with the Brookings Institution. I wanted to do a program on the Voice of America because of the accusations that we were involved, which of course was not true. So Paul wrote me his piece, and we never had the program and then he died, but he left it for me, and I have it.

Q: I was so sorry I couldn't get Paul before he died.

BAUER: The only thing I can say is that most of what he wrote coincides with my memory very clearly. And you will also see when we get to the point of the famous statement of Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge during the night, “The Free World cannot stand by idly.” Someone said, “If you don't stand by idly you're going to come in.”

Q: Of course, VOA was blamed for carrying what people said.

BAUER: Exactly. Years later, about two years ago, I was in the Princeton meeting which Eleanor Dulles had called on the hundredth anniversary of her brother, John Foster

Dulles's birth. There was a two-day affair there, and U. Alexis Johnson was there. I had to give a little talk about the days of Dulles on the Austrian program of the Voice of America, and also about the Hungarian revolution. Later on, after luncheon, Alexis Johnson came up to me and said, “I was interested in listening to you today because I was then ambassador in Prague.” Which I knew. I had said in my presentation, “We never in any way, shape or form incited the Hungarians to revolt, or to keep up the revolt.” He said to me—and that was interesting—”You're absolutely right. The Voice of America didn't, but it was a different story with Radio Free Europe.” And he added, “And Radio Free Europe was more widely listened to than the Voice of America.”

Q: Well, it's on so many hours.

BAUER: Right. I said, “I don't know what Radio Free Europe did or did not do. I know what we did.” But that was Alexis Johnson saying that. I have no idea whether this is so or not, but he couldn't dream of it, so there's probably some truth to it. We had nothing but investigations afterwards, of what we did and didn't do.

Q: Well, Henry Loomis and Alex Klieforth both have told me that VOA got a clean bill of health after that.

BAUER: Oh, absolutely. They are very correct. You didn't even know how many journalists came around, and the one who wrote—I think it was in the Toledo paper, because when I had been asked the 99th time about it I told the young man, “Let me tell you something. I'm a native Austrian and in 1848 the Hungarians revolted against the Hapsburgs. And strangely enough, the Hapsburgs called the Russian troops in, the Tsarist troops, to help them put down the Hungarian revolt. And the famous man by the name of Kossuth came to America.” And I said, “And believe you me, nobody was broadcasting to Hungary in 1884!” (Laughter) He wrote that in his story. Anyhow, there was no doubt about it. We were absolutely clean.

Q: And you carried what John Foster Dulles said, and Henry Cabot Lodge.

BAUER: Sure, we carried everything. Now, the Cabot Lodge thing. On that there's a little disagreement between me and Paul Nadanyi. He maintains that we did not broadcast the statement of Henry Cabot Lodge—or delayed or summarized it. In my clear-cut memory it is the exact opposite. We were picking up all night—and we were broadcasting 24 hours—and I came home about one o'clock in the morning. The Security Council was still on, and I remember vividly that Paul Nadanyi was on the phone with me and said, “We have the statement of Henry Cabot Lodge. He said such and such,” and said, “What should we do?” I said, “You play it. It is not our job to censor or change what officials say.” Now maybe—maybe—he confesses that he did something which he shouldn't have done. The statement came out anyhow.

Q: Alex Klieforth told me that we had a connection between Radio Budapest and VOA because we were getting material from them and we fed a line from Washington to the UN in New York so that Henry Cabot Lodge was able to stand there on the floor of the Security Council and say, “The tanks are at such-and-such a block.”

BAUER: That's right. But we did not incite. That's the point. We did not promote, incite or encourage. Period. It's over now. But I tell you, it's not over. It comes up every time. More recently, Mr. Bush made a statement in the Polish thing: “We should not want to repeat mistakes we made in 1956.” Maybe it is true that Radio Free Europe did something.

Q: They got a clean bill of health, too, years later.

BAUER: So I understand.

Q: Which may have been a whitewash.

BAUER: I don't know. And Alex was there. We all know what we did. Robert Button was then the director of the VOA.

The “Apple Pie” Committee

We still leave out McCarthy. I just want to tell you one thing which maybe has been forgotten. When we got into the aftermath of McCarthy, there were all sorts of strange things happening in the Voice of America. Did you ever hear of what we called the Apple Pie Committee?

Q: No.

BAUER: Well, it was under the regime of Mr. Washburn and company. It was agreed that service chiefs and branch chiefs and others of that level that were not American-born should be sort of examined as to their Americanism. I was then European Division chief, so I was the first one to go. You had to fill out forms. For instance, whether you participated in community affairs, in PTA and this sort of thing—what the regular thing for a good American was. You didn't hear about that?

Q: Never.

BAUER: Well, I'm glad I can go on record with it. Try to talk to others about it. It went down to the service chief level to be approved. We called it the Apple Pie Committee, since you had to be as American as apple pie. That was happening! I was almost sure you'd never heard of it.

Q: But you all got a clean bill of health?

BAUER: I don't know. No service chief was not approved, so far as I know.

Q: Well, what were the standards?

BAUER: Well, the standards were more or less: How do you measure Americanism? You had to write a statement about things like civic activities, PTA and so on.

Q: That's appalling.

BAUER: Absolutely. Apple Pie Committee

Q: After the McCarthy period.

BAUER: It was a consequence, in keeping with the McCarthy affair. Have you talked to Washburn?

Q: Tom Tuch is supposed to interview Washburn and I've given him some questions, but I have nothing yet.

BAUER: Please ask him to ask Washburn about the Apple Pie Committee, measuring the integration of foreign-born Americans into the American community. Can you see where Henry Kissinger would have been in those days? (Laughter)

Then I was policy officer—nothing very important. Then television —

Q: Before you get too far along, what other important developments occurred while you were European Division chief—in which you had to deal with policy, with management—that might shed some light on how VOA operated at the time?

BAUER: You probably know about those reviews of programs—two weeks of output to be translated and reviewed and so forth. Well, we did all that, and every single time a European division service was reviewed there was no policy violation that anybody could ever find. Now, there were great moments in terms of management. For instance, did you ever hear about the Georgian service and the man who was murdered?

Q: Yes, Alex Klieforth told me that story.

BAUER: Did he also tell you about the man who said he would go to New York because he had to shoot a Georgian?

Q: That's the one.

BAUER: It was a propos the murder. First there was the murder. There were two things. This fellow had an affair with an American woman. Then he married another girl. And he went up to the Woodner Hotel, and that woman was crazy and she shot him dead.

The other story was Mr. Dadiani. Somebody accused somebody of having been a Communist sympathizer or something, so he said, “I have to go and kill him.” That's when Alex brought him to me, and we talked to him and said, “Look, if you insist on that, then I have to call the authorities. You're threatening a murder, and it's my duty to prevent that.” So they finally agreed on an honor court, right? The man would go to a Georgian affair and the other man would withdraw the accusation, and he would accept it. And nobody was killed.

Episode Of “The Loyal American Underground” At VOA

Then there was the FSO, John Alexander Baker, who was chief of the Yugoslav service, who lives here now. In that service we had the difference between the Slovenians and the Croatians—not in very violent form.

Q: Well, you had the Czechs and the Slovaks —

BAUER: Yes, but that was fairly civilized. With the exception of the Hungarian revolution in those years I was there, and those daily management things that happen, and having to deal with Alexander Barmine on a daily basis, eh? And of course, with the aftermath of the McCarthy types who were sitting around in the policy meetings—the Loyal American Underground, you know—including Bertram Wolfe, who was the ideological adviser. Did you ever hear about him?

Q: Oh, sure. I didn't realize he was a member of the Loyal American Underground.

BAUER: No, he was not a member, but as a former Communist of course he was carrying the American flag all over the place, as they always do. And poor George Mann, who died now, was then the policy adviser, and they gave him a hard time. He was followed by Ned Roberts, who just died now, too, you know. They tried every single angle to taunt them, saying things like, “Now what kind of new guidance is this? Are we still in the business of fighting Communist?”—and so forth. The policy had changed a little bit, on the more positive side. Those morning meetings were terrible things. Even after the McCarthy thing had ended—you must have known the names of those McCarthyites: Gerald Dooher, Steve Baldanza, Howard Hotchner, Paul Deac—the famous Romanian.

Q: Vallimarescu has some wonderful stories about his run-ins with Paul Deac.

BAUER: Oh, yes. Have you talked to Tibor Borgida about them? That was a crowd. It was something to be seen.

Q: How many people would you estimate were in that group? I have heard everything from six to 25.

BAUER: Well, I probably can count off the hand about seven or eight of those really active people. Maybe there were a few people who were with them but not very prominently. There was a fellow by the name of Joseph Privitera, who was for a while the chief of the Italian service, who was sort of flirting or being close to them. Then there was this fellow, Glaser.

Q: Not Mort Glatzer.

BAUER: No, certainly not! This man was chief of the Hebrew service. He was more or less sucked in. I don't think they were really at the core of it at the beginning. Stuart Ayres, who was the one who accused me.

Q: Oh, he was?

BAUER: Oh, yes.

Further Notes On The McCarthy Era

Q: So we're going to get to that later.

BAUER: Yes. I'll tell what we'll do with that. The thing to do is, if you promise me that you'll give it back to me, I'll give you two things: number one, the Hungarian memo of Nadanyi; number two, the transcript of the hearings that deal with my part and other parts—Robert Goldman, Don Taylor, and so forth. The Senate of the United States.

Q: I'll take good care of it and get it back to you, yes, indeed.

BAUER: Good. I thought it's much easier. It tells you more about the whole thing.

Q: Well, did you have to testify?

BAUER: Oh, yes. You'll find it all in there. I do not have the original accusation of Ayres because that preceded it, you know. You must understand that we were totally ignorant of what was happening until the day it went on television. Nobody knew anything. And suddenly I got a call from Idris Rossell, who was Puhan's secretary across the street—I was in the other building, in the Field Services division—"You were mentioned on TV today." And that's how we found out that we were suddenly accused.

Q: What did he accuse you of?

BAUER: We did programs for local placement in Latin America. It was called "The Eye of the Eagle." They were sort of soap opera stories, but they were anti-Communist, the Cold War business. Suddenly the accusation came that I had mishandled the budget and toned down the anti-Communist content of the program.

You will see then the rest very clearly. And also the amazing thing when, of all people, Republican Senator Karl Mundt rose and said, “What are we doing here? Everything Mr. Bauer says is correct.” And so forth. One of the most conservative members. The Washington Post had a headline the next day: Mundt turns against McCarthy.

I don't want to sell you my wife's book. If I had a copy I would give it to you, but there is quite a bit in it on this particular subject—and all the things that happened in our home during those days. Late phone calls during the night. Threatening calls to our baby-sitter.

Q: Oh, my goodness!

BAUER: Oh, yes. You have no idea. It was an incredible affair. And not a very nice one, either, I can tell you. We had two small children, and it was not great fun when Mr. Fulton Lewis, Junior has you on the radio in the evening as that “hombre” and so forth, and my little daughter ran out of her bedroom and says, “Oh, Daddy, you're famous,” because she didn't understand what was happening. Calls to the baby-sitter: “You know you're working for a Communist.” And so forth.

Q: That was a terrible period.

BAUER: Oh, a horrible period. The funny thing is, they got themselves the wrong man. I was waiting for one thing. I had heard they didn't want to order us on the stand; we had to send telegrams to ask to be heard. And overnight we were brought in. Mr. Cohn received me, and said, “Oh, Mr. Bauer, we can get over your thing very quickly. What can you tell us about Mr. Johnson?” (who was then the Administrator of the State Department's International Information Administration, of which VOA was a part). He tried to buy me off. He said, “Oh, Mr. Johnson, is he a subversive guy?” I said, “All I know is that Mr. Johnson is a very competent administrator of this program,” and that was the end of it.

Q: This was Dr. Johnson, the head of the International Information Administration.

BAUER: Yes, yes, yes! It was a terrible period. And as my wife points out in the book, some people said to me, “Look, it will blow over. You can find another job. You speak English with a foreign accent. This is not the time for you to dissent.” I said, “To hell with that! I didn't go away from Nazi Europe to go into that sort of nonsense here.”Poor Kaghan, as you know, got it. And of course in Washington the Dulles administration (in the State Department) behaved abominably.

Q: So did the President of the United States.

BAUER: The President of the United States was not to be seen. However, I should also say, for the record, that in the Voice of America there were very outstanding men, among them Alfred Puhan, who in no uncertain terms stood up. Those were the days. It was simply incredible, incredible. You sometimes think back and say, it couldn't have happened, but it did. Many people have forgotten about that. And then all that great fun, you know, chasing Communists and homosexuals—and who was Mr. Cohn, huh? Turned out to be one of the boys, you know, on the other side of the issue. (Laughter)

It took quite a number of years, in my opinion, before the Voice of America recovered from that. No doubt about it. I was totally upset when that famous Mr. What's-his-name, who for years presided over the USIA, Mr. Wick—you know what they called the Voice of America: Air Wick. I was told that one time Mr. Wick had lunch with Mr. Cohn, if I'm not mistaken. I thought, if they called that character in, after all they've known about—I'm not certain it was Wick, so you may not want to use this story, but I know it was one of them who consulted with him.

Q: That doesn't surprise me.

BAUER: It was either Wick or somebody else in the Director's office.

Anyhow, there were lots of people in the Voice of America who behaved very beautifully at the same time, who stood up. And what always amazed me was that most of those great

super-Americans (”The Loyal American Underground” Group) were either immigrants, like Gerald Dooher, or first-generation Americans. Mr. Baldanza, whose parents came from Sicily, and so forth. See what I mean? I said, “Find me a Mayflower American!”Q: Was Virgil Fulling first-generation? I thought he was an old —

BAUER: He must be, yes.

Q: Virgil was sort of dumb.

BAUER: I was about to say, “Look, what was his IQ?” (Laughter). I never took him seriously, you know.

Q: Of course, in time he threw himself off a building.

BAUER: He was a dope, and could be used. So I never counted him in.

Q: He was very active, against Goldman and others in the newsroom.

BAUER: Sure, he was active, because they probably wrote the script for him. I don't think he ever could think of it himself. There was also another Romanian, Mr. Cocutz, who was a rather mild McCarthyite. He was sort of pulled in. Mr. Deac, of course, was an immigrant. I don't know whatever happened to him. He sort of disappeared from the scene. Do we know where he finally ended up?

I would like to make a point here on the McCarthy business. When Ted Streibert became director (of USIA) it was in the aftermath of the whole McCarthy mess. And he was a Republican appointee. He did something which we only found out later, and that no one ever mentioned. He established a committee—and I don't know who was on that committee—who looked over the security files of all those involved in the McCarthy business.

Q: Everybody charged.

BAUER: And accused.

Q: Oh. Oh.

BAUER: And there was a period when the Congress gave a six-month period of dismissing employees above the grade of, I believe, GS-7 unless they were war veterans, without any further recourse. Nobody ever told you about that?

Q: No.

BAUER: Yes, it did happen. And it was then that Mr. Streibert did have that authority. Civil Service status just meant nothing. The only thing that saved you was veterans status. Then they couldn't fire you. I never was able to find out who was on that committee. They went through those files. And then they began to confirm or not confirm people and fire people. And interestingly, neither yours truly was fired, nor Robert Goldman, nor Don Taylor. In fact, after I had passed, without knowing about it, the personnel officer—Ed Macy, that was his name—phoned me. I was on vacation, and he said, “I want to discuss with you a few people who are working for you, in terms of their usefulness,” and so on. He gave me a few names, and I'd say, “He's a very good man,” and so forth. Then it turned out that a few people were fired—I forget now who they were—simply dismissed. And I wouldn't be surprised if Paul Deac wasn't one of them.

Q: Nobody who was charged?

BAUER: Not a single one who was charged.

Q: Very interesting. I hadn't heard that story.

BAUER: And I say this for Mr. Ted Streibert, because he could have easily given in and said, “I don't care about the whole damn thing. We'll make a tabula rasa here. Goodbye.”

Q: In fact, that would have been the logical thing for him to do.

BAUER: Sure. “I've got other things to do here to rebuild here.” No. And he was not personally a very nice fellow, Streibert. He was sort of authoritarian. But that spoke for him. I do, for instance, know that they did fire a Hungarian, but I believe this was not on the grounds of anything political. I think he was fooling around too much with women, and had all sorts of problems. I believe it had nothing to do with political orientation. But they used that to get rid of a number of people. You might want to look into that: the six-month period of the law that permitted the new director of the newly-created USIA to do that. I thought I should tell you that, and other things that might have been lost—that one, and the Apple Pie Committee I'glad to report to you—I think that was about it. Those were more or less the highlights of it.

Q: In the European division, when you were the chief, what was John Albert's job?

BAUER: John Albert first was chief of the German service. And then I made him chief of the West European branch.

Q: Did he take over the European division when you left, or was there somebody in between?

BAUER: I'm trying to remember. I'm not sure.

Q: I want to hear some more about your period in the policy office. How did the policy office function in those days, compared to before or since?

BAUER: To begin with, you know, to work for Barry Zorthian is already something.

Q: Len Reed said he was the ablest man he's ever worked with.

BAUER: No doubt about it. Able, and driving.

Q: He had more energy than anybody I've ever seen.

BAUER: And he could do two things at the same time. He was talking to you about this and meantime he wrote a memo. Able, driving, but not only that, he's driving others, too. I'll never forget, one morning I came into the office and I had to bring a few things in. He said, “Robert, wonderful, you took work home with you.” I didn't.

Q: He had that bulging briefcase every night when he left.

BAUER: And he expected you to have the same. I really respected the man, but it was not a bed of roses at all, I can tell you. I wasn't there very long. There was nothing there that I find sticks in my mind. It just went on the basis—you did the normal thing: you went to the policy meetings uptown, on Pennsylvania Avenue, you were on the phone, you wrote up the morning guidance and went to the 9:30 morning meeting...

Q: Were there any particular problems that confronted you, as between the Agency and the Voice, at that time?

BAUER: No. I do remember that some of us continuously said, “This is a lot of nonsense.” As you know, policy for a long time was that there were no differences between Peking and Moscow, and the guidance would say, “In an editorial of the New York Times, cut out the second paragraph.” We said, “Now wait a minute. You either quote the New York Times or you don't quote the New York Times.” This of course changed, very much so. Did you ever run into Johnny Pauker?

Q: Of course.

BAUER: Is he still around? He was in policy guidance at Pennsylvania Avenue.

Q: I think he still lives here in town. Retired with Shoo-Shoo, his wife.

BAUER: He's a nut from the word go.

In the policy office period there is nothing that sticks in my mind as a particularly interesting thing.

Q: How did you feel about the Voice, looking back on your various jobs there?

BAUER: It was a most exciting time, most of the time. The years I spent there, from the beginning, also overseas, London and then back. The European division chief job was most interesting. The North Europe branch in the midst of the Cold War—it was altogether a most interesting thing. As I've said very often, in this field of radio broadcasters and journalists you always collect a number of very strange characters. It's part of the profession, it seems to me. And then you run into the emigres, and you run into all those things that go on between Slovenes and Serbs, and ideological differences, and so forth. So altogether it's a complicated array of people, but I find them—most of them, most of them—very hard-working, very loyal, regardless of what they sought afterwards about the policy they had to defend. It's a different thing.

I wonder how many of those people are still alive. When I had the Baltic services, they said, “Oh, yes, one day we're going to be independent again. I thought, “My God, I hope some of them are still alive and read what is going on there now.” A most fascinating time with a lot of very fascinating people. I must say I could have done without the McCarthy era. The country could have done without it altogether, right? But I'm alive, I came out all right—not like a Theodore Kaghan or a Reed Harris, or particularly that engineer who committed suicide. My wife has printed his farewell letter in her book, what he wrote to his wife.

Q: So when did you leave VOA?

BAUER: I left VOA for my first foreign service assignment—that was from the television office...

Bauer's Period In The Television Service

Q: Tell me about the television period, before we get overseas.

BAUER: It was that transition period when nobody knew why there should be separate film and television units. Of course, the technology wasn't what it is today, like the Worldnet and so forth. I was sort of holding the fort there.

Q: I know the experience well because I went through the same thing when Mr. Wick transferred me to the television service.

BAUER: Oh, did he?

Q: That's when he kicked me out of VOA. I wound up as deputy and acting director there for almost a year.

BAUER: But at least it was in a big organization.

Q: It was the television and film service, the way it is now, though nothing like as big as it is now.

BAUER: Well, (in my day) it was very small. We hired a few people, and a few programs were thought up and contracted out. The head of the film service, whose name escapes me now, insisted that television should be together with film because there was no difference between television programming and film programming. There was real controversy: why should there be a separate TV service? And on top of it, what does it have to do with broadcasts, you can only do programs on tape so it's practically film. So there was a lot of controversy. They brought in from the outside Romney Wheeler, an old friend of mine, and at that time it was reorganized and Romney wanted me to stay on as

deputy but in the meantime Washburn had other ideas. Then, too, the pressure was on to go overseas and into the foreign service, and so I went to Iran.

Q: How long were you in the television service?

BAUER: Not very long. Those things are blurred in my mind, but a maximum of a year.

Q: I was there fourteen months and three weeks.

BAUER: There was a very nice fellow who went with me for many, many years—Jack Gaines.

Q: Oh, yes. He's still in New York, still hanging on. He had a triple by-pass heart operation in Florida.

BAUER: He's a great guy. His original name was Goldstein. He made wonderful jokes about it. He said one day after he changed his name, a man came in and said, “I would like to talk to Mr. Gaines. Are you Mr. Gaines?” And he said, “Yes, it's spelled G-o-l-d-s-t-e-i-n.”

As I said, this was much more a question of where should it be. Then there was a fellow who took over named Ted Long, whom they then sent off as a television man to be stationed in, I believe, Lebanon. Just a sinecure. Romney Wheeler didn't last long, either, and then television and film were combined, and there was a fight: should it be VOA or should it not be VOA.

The only other thing, incidentally—I want to go back to the Loomis era.

Q: It was a long era.

BAUER: Henry Loomis was a man who I believe does not care for people. You know, when he went into this great purge of having people fired left and right, and also this big push that when you reach 50 you should get out and make way for youth...

Q: That was when he was in the Agency as Deputy Director.

BAUER: I was with him only briefly in VOA. When he joined the Voice, I was in television, so it was just a few months. I just had one encounter with him, in which he asked me where I thought the television thing should be. Then the next thing was that they gave a big farewell party for me, and he presided over it with a very nice speech and handed me an attache case.

So that was my encounter with Henry Loomis. But I knew that he put this tremendous pressure on afterwards, that people should retire. And what did they call this organization they had? The young types who formed an organization—I don't remember what they called themselves. I was five times a foreign service inspector but that was long after the VOA. I went on and was in Teheran as cultural affairs officer. Then I was media officer in Paris.

1957: Cultural Officer (As Head Of Bi-National Center Teheran)

Q: Let's talk about Teheran. Tell me about your work, what you did.

BAUER: I was in charge of the binational centers there. Burnett Anderson was my PAO, and Martin Ackerman the CAO. My achievement was that I established the Iran-America Student Center. We set it up because we knew this was where the main thrust of anti-Shah feeling was, among the university students. It went very well. They came, and we had interesting programs. Of course we had a big English-teaching program, and a library. The main thing, of course, was that we built a new Iran-American building. It was a joint enterprise. The Shah, the Persians, gave us the land, and we had PL 480 money with which we built it. I was just there two years, and in those two years the major achievement

was the beginning of the new building, plus the Student Center, which was considered to be a very good thing for our purposes. I got a nice special commendation for that.

Media Officer, Paris: 1959. A “Non Job”

Then they sent me to an absolutely non-job in Paris: media officer, which meant nothing—sort of a radio officer, film officer, and so forth. It was a leftover from the days when it was necessary. When Ed Murrow came through and they made a cut in the West European program I immediately volunteered my job, to the surprise of everybody. People tried to get into Paris. (I speak French very well, you know.) They transferred me to Washington. On the morning of my transfer to Washington I got a phone call—we were on the way to the boat—it was Bill Cody calling from Washington asking if I wanted to go to Bonn as number three officer, because they found out I speak German. (Laughter) I said, “It's a bit too late. I'm on my way. Thank you.”

Q: How long were you in Paris?

BAUER: About one year and two months.

Q: So you felt no sense of accomplishment in what you say was a non-job.

BAUER: It was a non-job. Literally. This was literally a waste of taxpayers' money.

Q: Was that because the IO and the CAO did everything?

BAUER: The French had their own radio correspondents here. What could we do for them? And whatever had to be done was done by the IO or the Assistant IO.

Q: So how did you occupy your time?

BAUER: By trying a few things that had nothing to do with reality. It was a shame. In fact, when they assigned me there, Mowinckel was the deputy PAO, and said to me, “You shouldn't take the job.” I said, “What can I do? They assigned me here.”

1961: Series Of Assignments in Washington, Including First Director Of USIA's ForeignPress Center In Washington

So I got myself out, and went into IOP (Policy and Plans), where I began to write a handbook on communication findings. That was with Hew Ryan and Barbara White. Then they made me the first director of the Foreign Press Center, which was then located right in the USIA headquarters on Pennsylvania avenue. Of course, now it's in the National Press Building, with an elaborate set-up. I was one person with a secretary. Later on they gave me Frank Baba as an assistant.

Q: Was this the actual beginning of the foreign press center? You had to start from scratch?

BAUER: Absolutely. It was exactly the beginning. Well, of course, we had the press center in New York. What I did was to begin to move around the foreign press corps, and invited them to come over and see what we had—which was not very much. We had about two and a half rooms. Frank Baba was cultivating the Japanese with great success because he speaks Japanese. We tried to start a few briefings for them. One of the things I did was in the election in which Mr. Wallace of Alabama was still running. I arranged a day-long briefing on the American election process, and I had the major candidates represented, including at the end Patrick Moynihan, who was then in the White House as a special assistant.

I also had briefings for them when Supreme Court nominations came up. So I began in a small way. I arranged for foreign correspondents to take certain trips—on their own, but arranged what and whom they should see, such as urban renewal in Cleveland.I then

landed in CU, the Cultural Affairs Bureau, as the deputy director of the office of cultural presentations, which handles all the touring for artists. This was an interesting time. The program was under fire, whether it was worth anything. Mr. Rooney of the Appropriations committee was sitting on us day and night. And then we got Lucius Battle in as Assistant Secretary of State, and he got the situation very nicely under control.

1963: Cultural Affairs Officer, Cairo; Then, 1965, Country Public Affairs Officer For Egypt

Then suddenly I got a phone call: would I be interested in going as CAO to Cairo?

Q: And you said yes.

BAUER: I said yes. Jim Halsema was then the PAO. My predecessor was John Slocum, who got the job upgraded to first secretary of embassy as a diplomatic title instead of attache. So I got that one, and I was there from '63 to '65. Then Halsema left and I became the PAO. And Lucius Battle was the ambassador, for whom I had worked in the State Department, but he had nothing to do with my assignment there. But we found each other again and became very good friends. I was there until the war.

Q: I want to hear how you approached the job in Cairo, because the whole problem of U.S. relations with Israel and the Arab countries is—I just don't see how an American can success- fully deal with an Arab audience, given our connection to the Israelis, even with the greater cooperation or fellow-feeling between the Egyptians and the Israelis.

BAUER: As you know, if you are in the USIA you don't deal with the foreign minister or the deputy foreign minister. That's for the political section. We had a wonderful library in Cairo and in Alexandria. We had English-teaching programs. We put out quite a bit of written materials. We had a Fulbright commission, a very big one there. So it was a very big program. This was now even before Sadat. It was Gamal Abdel Nasser at his worst.

Q: That's my point exactly.

BAUER: There were two levels. The one level was the official one, you know, regarding Israel. You have to defend yourself. The second level was the one in which they would tell you privately, “Frankly speaking, we couldn't care less about what's happening in the Sinai peninsula.” They were much more interested in getting another PL 480 agreement and food from the United States, and they didn't want to get into another war. Officially, you had to do all the right things. You had a lot of contacts. We would give parties, my wife and I, and because we were the cultural affairs types the Egyptians could come to our home. Of course, they had to report afterwards. We all knew that. Our people had to report, too. But sometimes when we had a cultural presentation coming in, we would have a cocktail party for a hundred Egyptians and 95 would come.

Q: That's very impressive.

Experiences During 1967 Arab-Israeli War

BAUER: To show you—when I was PAO, the '67 war came, and after a country team meeting we evacuated the dependents. If there was no war we'd bring them back. Athens was the main point (of evacuation). The staff and I were there, and we operated. I agreed with the charg# d'affaires—we had a new ambassador who had not presented his credentials yet; he never could, because the war came along—that I would give a cocktail party for the enormous number of journalists who came over—like the vultures, you know. (Laughter) I had this wonderful PAO residence, with a big garden.

I'll give you two items of interest: the man who later became Egypt's ambassador here, Ashraf Ghorbal, a very fine gentleman, was then in the foreign office and I dealt with him quite a bit. There was a peace mission supposed to go—Nasser appointed Zachariah Mouaheddin to go to America—the crisis was already on—to Washington on a peace mission, to see whether something could be arranged. They first had thought that Vice President Humphrey should come over, but that didn't work out.

I was a member of a club there, with swimming pool and so forth, and one morning there I got a phone call. The foreign ministry wanted to talk to me. I walked in, and all the other foreign diplomats said, “Oh my God, what are you going to hear?” I walked in—this was the day before it happened—and it was our friend Ghorbal, who said, “Look, you know I'm going to Washington, and I'm probably going to stay there for a while, and I understand that you have a house to rent in Washington. Can I rent it from you?” I said, “Look, that is awfully nice of you. I don't know whether you will find it suitable. My sister-in-law lives in Washington. Here is her name. She has all the details. When you get there you phone her. Good luck, and I hope you like the house and you get the house. In the meantime, good luck on your mission.” I walked out, and they were all standing there, and I made the stupidest remark. I said, “Well, the war has been postponed. This man is going to Washington and is going to stay in my house.”

The next day the cocktail party was scheduled to be held, with my secretary playing the hostess, since my wife was evacuated. The embassy people came, and the Egyptians streamed in by the dozens. That morning the war had started—boom, boom, boom. We were all standing there properly dressed to go with Ambassador-designate Richard Nolte to the palace to present his credentials to Nasser. Well, the presentation was canceled.

I didn't know what to do about the cocktail party, but said, “Let's see what will happens”. So in the afternoon all the Egyptians came. In the meantime, McCloskey, the State Department spokesman, had said, “We're keeping neutral in spirit and in action.” They came, and said, “You are going to play a wonderful role, because you can be the mediators.” Suddenly, bingo, another air raid alarm. We had this big garden there in our PAO residence, and suddenly we saw two Israeli jets cruising like observer planes over Cairo. The Egyptian ack-acks started, and the worst thing was that some of the shrapnel fell into our yard, so we moved the cocktail party quickly into the house.

Q: I guess you would!

BAUER: That night came the moment when they concocted the lie that the U.S. and British air forces—by the way, I found out later from an Egyptian friend why they felt that way, and I've never heard it otherwise. It was considered that it would take the Israelis returning from a sortie about 12 to 14 minutes to reload. According to that story, they had refined it to two minutes and 30 seconds. Consequently, when this continuous wave came, they came to the conclusion that it couldn't be the Israelis alone. That was the theory.

So then we had the break of relations, which was fascinating. We were told that relations were broken and that the Egyptians were coming over to the embassy. We stood there to receive them—Ambassador-designate Nolte and I—and the delegation from the foreign ministry came in, and they first greeted me and said, “Oh, Dr. Bauer, I've always enjoyed your English-teaching classes and your library.” That's how the relations break began, with this very nice statement.

Then it became nasty. Ambassador Nolte asked me to move into his residence. Then the mob actions began. And finally the evacuation was arranged. That night we were transported to the railroad station and went on a special train to Alexandria, where we were kept by the Egyptians on a very hot day in the Alexandria harbor with nothing to eat and nothing to drink. We were under Spanish protection. I had had to preside over the hoisting of the Spanish flag over the American embassy.

If you ever come to Woodstock, New York, where I have my summer home, I have the Spanish flag hanging there, because eight months later I came back to Cairo on a mission for USIA, and our interests section there, the administrative officer told me they had just exchanged the flag for a new one and that I could have the old one as a memento. So I still have the Spanish flag hanging right there in Woodstock. (Laughter)

A Spanish colonel, Morales, went with us as protector, and the Egyptians said they did not recognize U.S. diplomatic passports. The little Spanish colonel exploded and read them the riot act, and they said, “All right, we recognize the U.S. document.” And then we went

on this little immigration boat up to Athens, and just outside the territorial zone we saw the most beautiful sight you've ever seen: an American destroyer waiting for us. We had on the boat the foreign correspondents. My friend Dick Helgerson, the Information Officer in Cairo who became Information Officer in Athens, was in radio conversation with us, already arranging for interviews by the newspaper people when they got there.

That's when our charg# d'affaires, Mr. Nes, gave the famous interview that cost him his job. He was a career officer, who accused the Johnson administration of having bungled the whole affair—which a career diplomat normally shouldn't say. He gave it to Tom Fenton of the Baltimore Sun, having been himself from Baltimore, and that ended his career.

One other thing happened. They burned down our library on Thanksgiving Day, 1966. Those were African students who protested against our helping in the former Belgian Congo. Remember our airplanes helped get the people out of Katanga, under Johnson's orders. So of course with the connivance of the Egyptian police, they marched up to the embassy on Thanksgiving day, caught a few Marines there who just had to hole up, and set fire to the building, particularly my area, with the library and my office, which was completely burned out. The only thing saved was my appointment by President Kennedy to the foreign service—which I also have hanging.

I must tell you a very funny story. I had not known what was going on. We had been to the Thanksgiving church service and then all went home to various Thanksgiving dinners. Then I had to go to a Coptic wedding. We drove down, and suddenly my wife said, “That's funny. I hear sirens going. There must be a fire somewhere.” Off I went to the Coptic affair, and then later on there was a reception by the cultural affairs officer of the German embassy, who became a good friend of mine. I said, “Well, let's go over there for a moment.” I walked in with my wife, and they looked at me, and the German ambassador was the first to speak. He said, “It's so nice of you to come tonight.” I said, “Well, Mr. Ambassador, it's my pleasure.” The cultural affairs officer said, “No, really.

That you could find the time, under the circumstances." I said, "What the hell is going on? I was at a Coptic wedding—" "You don't know?" "Don't know what?" "Your embassy is burning." (Laughter) Boy, I was out in a jiffy! Straight down to the embassy.

Q: What an experience!

BAUER: Oh, absolutely. Of course, we rebuilt the library again, and the Egyptians immediately came through, giving us a building which they had stolen from somebody —sequestration, or whatever they call it. Then we reopened the library, and called it the John F. Kennedy Library. Charlton Heston was there at the time, on a tour for the State Department. He had dinner at my house, and I said to him, "Would you do me a favor? Tomorrow we have the opening of the library. How about you reading the John F. Kennedy inaugural address?" He said, "Surely. I'll do it." So that was a star performance.

Q: An auspicious beginning.

BAUER: And it's still working very well. We immediately had the people coming in. And later, after that terrible war, when we were thrown out, we were reestablished very quickly.

Q: How long was the library out when it was burned?

BAUER: Since we had to redecorate the building we were given, I think the whole time was about eight or nine months, maybe ten months. And the Egyptians came to the opening, the Minister of Culture himself, and so forth. On second thought they didn't think it was very funny, what was happening. So, that was it.

Q: When you were evacuated, did you go back to Egypt, or was that the end?1967: Cultural Affairs Officer, India

BAUER: No, that was done; that was the end of Egypt altogether. That was '67, and then I came back to the States, back to USIA. At the last minute I was asked to go to India. Dan Oleksiw had created new jobs there in which he appointed cultural affairs officers—I was

one—to deal with foreign affairs. My job was to travel all over India to give lectures and talks about American foreign policy.

Q: As a cultural affairs officer?

BAUER: Yeah.

Q: It doesn't sound logical, but —

BAUER: There was another one who was appointed to do economics, a third one on art, and so forth. The problem I had is, I got in the midst of the Indo-Pakistan war, in which of course we sided with Pakistan officially, and I had to defend the policy in India. Somebody said, “Why don't you go to Rome and tell the Pope that Martin Luther was right?” (Laughter) I said, “Give me a plane and I'll go!” (Laughter) That would be easier.

Q: That's impossible!

BAUER: Oh, it was fascinating! It was fascinating. My wife traveled with me quite a bit, and we had very interesting moments.

Q: How did they receive these lectures? Did they even attend?

BAUER: Oh, yes, they did attend. I found a formula, a basic one. I came in, and after I was introduced I said to them, “Let me tell you this. I was once a lawyer, and a lawyer is used to being told, 'You hear both cases before you make your judgment.' So I am here today to give you the view of the United States government on the basic crisis. You will probably disagree with me, but what I have to tell you is the basic tenets of American foreign policy and how we view the crisis on the subcontinent.” That usually did it.

Q: That disarmed them.

BAUER: What could they do—shoot me? I remember I spoke to all the members of the High Court in Nagpur, and they were all in their black robes, and the CAO who came with me said, “They'll probably hang you right now!” (Laughter) At the end, the presiding judge got up, and said, “Sir, we want to tell you that we of course all disagree with you, but as professionals we'd say you didn't make a bad case. Now let's go and have tea.” (Laughter) So you could do it that way.

On one or two occasions it got rougher, when they tried to show their anger. And in fact once the chairman said, “You don't have the floor now. We don't want to hear what you have to say.” I said, “All right, goodbye. I'm leaving.” That happened, too. It was a tough assignment but it was very interesting—all over India, into various universities all over the place.

Q: That would be fascinating.

BAUER: So then came the mandatory retirement.

Q: That was when it was still 60?

BAUER: Because of the transitional period, I retired at 62. And two weeks after I retired, I took on my job with the faculty at Kenyon College in Ohio.

Q: Thank you very much, Bob.

End of interview